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President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 34 *(continued)*

Assistance in mine clearance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/540)

Mrs. Peña Zeledón (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Since the beginning of the debate on the item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance", my delegation has spoken on and co-sponsored the resolutions on this item that have been adopted by the General Assembly. We have done this to demonstrate the enormous importance Nicaragua attaches to the problem of landmines and to their destruction.

Nicaragua is a country of 130,000 square kilometres, yet it has 100,000 landmines left over from 10 long years of civil war. The well known repercussions of these deadly weapons include ongoing irreparable loss to our economy, and problems for refugees returning home. The enormous number of displaced persons in urban areas is alarming, given the health problems related to deficient basic services. These are some of the consequences of landmines in countries that suffer from this scourge, whose primary victims are innocent civilians and children.

It is essential that the international community continue to provide consistent cooperation in mine clearance, because the countries affected by this problem cannot solve it by themselves. These efforts must be accompanied by action to prevent the proliferation of these arms, or else those of the international community in mine clearance will be in vain.

In this context, we recognize the need to reach an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines, as stated in the draft resolution adopted in the First Committee. We welcome the various prohibitions, moratoriums and other restrictions in place on anti-personnel landmines.

Nicaragua, firmly resolved to explore new ways of dealing with this scourge — both in its statement in the general debate in the First Committee and in its capacity as acting secretary of the countries of the Central American region — supported the establishment of a register of landmines as a specific means of encouraging trust and transparency and to control more effectively the use, transfer and indiscriminate production of landmines.

The United Nations has been providing assistance in mine clearance since 1994 through the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. It has exerted efforts to strengthen international instruments to counteract this modern epidemic through the convening of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

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We regret that the Conference did not achieve the hoped for success due to a lack of political will, which prevented progress towards the actual prohibition that the international community had so desired. We trust, however, that the mechanism for annual consultations and the commitment to hold another review conference in five years reflect our sincere desire to move ahead towards our common goal: the complete elimination of this kind of weapon.

The experience of El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that there must be very close coordination, particularly in the areas of mine clearance, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. My delegation would like to emphasize that more resources must be made available to the Secretariat, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for mine-clearance programmes.

We trust that the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance will have sufficient resources to play a more active role in the financing of demining programmes and thereby to extend its programmes to an ever larger number of affected countries. We welcome the initiative of Germany to raise this issue in the Security Council last August, which resulted in a fruitful debate and offered new ways of dealing with these deadly weapons.

Consistent with this, the Council of Ministers of Central America, which met in Guatemala on 12 September this year, decided to declare Central America a zone free from anti-personnel landmines, in which the production, possession, acquisition or transfer of these weapons is prohibited.

We would also point out that, at the twenty-sixth session of the Organization of American States, held in the Republic of Panama last June 1996, a resolution entitled "Support for Mine-Clearing in Central America" was adopted. This drew attention to the ongoing and serious problem of landmines and their effects in the Central American region.

My delegation appreciates the contribution of those countries that have always been willing to provide assistance in the area of technology for mine clearance. We firmly believe that even the most advanced technology cannot eradicate completely the problems caused by mines. We would reiterate that a final solution to the problem of mines is the complete ban of the production, transfer and stockpiling of this kind of weapon.

Mr. Babar (Pakistan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the activities being undertaken by the United Nations in mine clearance. I would also like to thank the Government of Denmark for circulating the report of the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology, held at Elsinore. Both reports outline interesting proposals and ideas and provide a good basis for further work in finding ways and means to tackle the problems caused by the indiscriminate use of landmines.

Over 110 million mines are today scattered in more than 70 countries. Up to 25,000 men, women and children are maimed or killed each year by landmines. Around 250,000 people have lost their limbs to landmines. It will cost over $1 billion for their treatment and rehabilitation.

Landmines have caused social and economic havoc in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, Afghanistan alone has almost 10 million mines scattered all over the country. Thousands of Afghan refugees maimed by landmines have been treated in hospitals and rehabilitation centres in Pakistan. We continue to host over 1.5 million Afghan refugees, some of whom have now been stranded in Pakistan for over 17 years, as they cannot return to their country due to the landmines planted in their homeland.

It is encouraging to note that the international community fully realizes the menace of landmines. In recent years, concerted efforts have been made to clear unexploded mines and to alleviate the suffering of the landmine victims. Governmental and non-governmental organizations have launched campaigns to provide resources and technology for mine-clearance operations. The United Nations has played an important role in sensitizing the general public and in generating resources for mine-clearance operations.

The work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, as a focal point for United Nations humanitarian mine-clearance operations, is praiseworthy. A Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance has been established. A number of international conferences have been held or are being planned to examine ways and means effectively to tackle the problem of unexploded landmines.

Despite those encouraging developments, the efforts of the international community to deal with this problem

have not been adequate. One area which needs urgent attention is the provision of sufficient resources for mine-clearance operations. The contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund have not been enough. Response to requests for in-kind contributions to establish a standby United Nations mine-clearance capability has been lukewarm. As mine-clearance operations require a continuous flow of resources, voluntary contributions would not be sufficient effectively to address this issue.

According to the Secretary-General's report, between $50 billion and $100 billion would be required to rid the affected countries of this menace. At the present pace of clearing 100,000 mines per year, it would take many decades to overcome this crisis. We therefore need to pool our resources as well as enforce regulations to ensure universal adherence to existing multilateral instruments on the indiscriminate use of landmines. We also need to explore possibilities for establishing international mechanisms that call upon the States responsible for using mines indiscriminately to pay for mine-clearance operations.

Reflecting the gravity of the problem, Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was amended recently. Steps now need be taken to ensure universal adherence to the Convention and its Protocols. We believe that further measures could also be considered in relevant multilateral forums to address the problems arising out of the indiscriminate use of landmines.

Ms. Coelho da Cruz (Angola): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/51/540 and congratulates the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for its role in the coordination of our national mine action programme.

My Government attaches great importance to the question of mine clearance and has made every effort to carry out successfully the ongoing demining process in cooperation with the United Nations system.

As members know, my country was immersed in a civil war that lasted more than 30 years and, as a result, carries the burden of approximately 70,000 amputees, 8,000 of whom are children, victims of the mines planted during the war. The implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, signed two years ago, allowed the establishment of a mine programme in the most affected areas.

The programme experienced some delays due to the complexity of the process and a lack of close cooperation from UNITA, which was also involved in the process. However, the National Institute for the Removal of Explosive Obstacles, established for that purpose, pursues its mission with dedication. The demining of access routes is a priority in order to facilitate free movement of people, goods and United Nations personnel in charge of the humanitarian assistance programmes. Of the estimated 15 million mines strewn across the country, more than 80,000 have been removed.

There are currently an estimated 110 million mines buried in the ground in more than 70 countries. My delegation considers the question of landmines one of the most important and urgent issues before the international community. The mines left by war represent one of the major obstacles to economic development and to the return of displaced persons to their homes.

Angola supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to mobilize the international community and the United Nations Member States to provide the human, financial and material support necessary to address the world crisis caused by mines. My delegation also shares the Secretary-General's opinion that the cost of caring for mine victims is a heavy burden for weak societies recovering from conflict. We need to pursue parallel approaches if we are to tackle the root causes of the problem and move towards a global ban on anti-personnel landmines. At the same time, the promotion of technical improvements to maximize the effectiveness of mine detection and humanitarian mine-clearance operations is urgently needed.

The convening in May of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which made some amendments to Protocol II on mines, the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology, held in July in Denmark, the Security Council's open debate in August, and, most recently, the Ottawa Conference, demonstrate that the issue is receiving significant political consideration and encourage the follow-up of those initiatives.

My delegation hopes that the concrete proposals launched at today's debate will lead to concrete proposals for practical improvements of demining efforts. In that context, it appeals to the Member States to honour their pledges to the Voluntary Trust Fund, the focal point for United Nations mine-clearance activities.

Before concluding, I would like, on behalf of my Government, to express my appreciation to the United

Nations system and to the Governments and non-governmental organizations that contribute to the demining programme in Angola with courage and dedication and to pay tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives on behalf of mine victims.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and informative report on assistance in mine clearance, as contained in document A/51/540. We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the courageous efforts of United Nations personnel and to individuals from non-governmental organizations and other international organizations who have been instrumental in establishing and implementing mine-clearance programmes.

The grim severity and pervasiveness of the danger posed by landmines call for a concerted response at the global level. Ever since the General Assembly first took up the issue of assistance in mine clearance at its forty-eighth session in 1993, support in the international community for humanitarian mine-clearance activities has steadily increased.

An encouraging sign of this changing mood has been the establishment and subsequent expansion of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. Since its launching in November 1994 by the Secretary-General, it has become the principal mechanism for financing humanitarian mine-related activities, particularly in their critical early stages. My delegation is pleased to note that $32.7 million has so far been pledged to the Fund and we look forward to this figure increasing in the years to come. The Government of the Republic of Korea, for its part, will contribute $100,000 to the Fund next year, adding to its contribution this year of the same amount.

My delegation also welcomes the outcome of the mine-clearance Pledging Conference held in Geneva in July 1995 and the valuable impetus it has given to the international community's efforts to raise the considerable funds needed to implement mine-action programmes, promote greater public awareness of landmine issues and further strengthen international cooperation in this regard.

By making land impassable, unharvestable and uninhabitable, landmines present a broad and multifaceted threat. They can paralyse peacekeeping operations, humanitarian relief and, in the long run, severely stunt a country's post-conflict economic reconstruction and development.

A comprehensive threat calls for a comprehensive solution and the mine-action programmes we undertake must therefore carefully integrate and coordinate the roles of all organizations involved, whether they be United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations or other international organizations.

Of all the United Nations bodies involved in mine clearance, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have played the most prominent roles in pioneering and implementing mine-clearance programmes. My delegation believes that close cooperation and coordination between these two Departments are essential to ensure that operational demining activities and humanitarian mine-action programmes are satisfactorily carried out in a complementary manner.

We believe that, in addition to improving coordination among the various organizations involved in mine clearance, the United Nations also needs an enhanced ability to respond rapidly to mine-related contingencies. In this regard, we support the further strengthening of the demining standby capacity so that the United Nations can initiate field operations with the same swiftness as non-governmental organizations and avoid the bureaucratic delays that can lead to needless civilian casualties.

As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, humanitarian mine-action programmes, although coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, often involve the participation of other United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations. Whichever organizations are involved, however, it is vital to ensure that the objective of mine-action programmes remains the same: to build the indigenous mine-clearing capacity of countries affected, so that they can learn to help themselves.

Ultimately, the main responsibility for mine clearance lies with the country affected. After all, complete mine clearance will almost certainly require a longer time-frame than any United Nations country programme can sustain. Before that time elapses, however, the United Nations and other involved agencies or non-governmental organizations can do much to develop a repository of mine-clearance know-how in countries affected.

Landmines are a threat to the international community, less because of their explosive power than

because of the indiscriminate and inhumane manner in which they have been used. A shocking 110 million mines are believed to be currently scattered in more than 70 countries. And every year, these hidden killers kill or maim an estimated 25,000 people. To control this carnage, we need to improve the coordination, funding and technology of mine clearance.

In this regard, we welcome the timely offers of some interested Governments to host international conferences on demining issues next year. We sincerely hope that those meetings will contribute greatly to reinforcing international support for the work of the United Nations in mine clearance and to accelerating progress towards the safer, faster and more effective demining methods so badly needed now.

It is important to recognize, however, that mine clearance can only be a part of the solution. Because the number of mines laid each year far outstrips the number being cleared, mine clearance must not be our only remedy. It must be part of an integrated, comprehensive effort to control not only the planting and usage of mines, but also their production and transfer. Indeed, we need to seek solutions that address both the supply-side and end-user side of the landmine problem.

My Government shares the deep concern of the international community over the scourge of landmines, both because of the brutal suffering they impose upon innocent civilians and the paralysis they can inflict upon a country's economic and social development. Eliminating the tragic human cost of these weapons will require the international community to address the whole spectrum of problems that landmines cause, ranging from humanitarian to disarmament issues. In this context, my Government recently extended its export moratorium on anti-personnel mines for one additional year and, for humanitarian reasons, is now positively considering accession to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, including the amended Protocol II.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate its conviction that no nation can overlook the horrendous magnitude of the landmine problem. It has become a global crisis that requires a global response. It is natural, therefore, that the United Nations play a leading role in solving the problem and in guiding the international community in its efforts to find a comprehensive solution.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The presence of 110 million landmines is a major economic and human problem — an international problem which every year claims 25,000 civilian victims — over and above the fact that it prevents both the return of displaced persons to their homes and post-conflict reconstruction.

That is why we support the proposals on this issue contained in the Secretary-General's report. The true dimensions of this problem can clearly be seen when it is set against the background of the technical and material restrictions on demining that prevent any easy or rapid implementation and when we consider the risks and costs that make it prohibitive to individual countries. For this reason, Egypt believes that the international conferences and meetings on landmines that have been held in 1996 constitute a good basis for launching serious and concrete efforts to destroy mines already laid, as well as to restrict the proliferation of new mines in the future. These meetings include the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, held in Geneva early this year, which led to the adoption of amended Protocol II on anti-personnel landmines; the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology, held in Denmark; the Ottawa Conference on the prohibition of landmines within the context of peacekeeping operations; and meetings of the Security Council on the same subject.

Our interest in these meetings focused on the priorities that Governments attach to demining activities, because Egypt is among those countries with the greatest number of landmines planted in their territory. They are mainly in the western part of the country, where large-scale military operations took place during the Second World War. In describing the horror of this problem, which has been described by others elsewhere, I am not exaggerating in saying that there are 23 million landmines of various power and types. The existence of this enormous quantity of landmines on our territory is a concrete danger in the daily lives of civilians. Furthermore, it sets up economic and technical obstacles to construction, urban growth and other development in the medium and long term. Egypt has made a great many efforts and spent millions of dollars on demining. From 1981 to 1991, 11 million mines were neutralized and, in July 1991, Egypt launched a new plan aimed at neutralizing all remaining mines — 23 million of them — by the year 2006.

Although the United Nations has confirmed the existence of that number of mines, the report of the Secretary-General does not refer specifically to this subject. Egypt is not on the list of countries most affected by landmines, which seriously restricts its eligibility for assistance from United Nations demining programmes coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. We hope that this will be corrected as soon as possible, so that we can more easily reach the objectives set by the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

To illustrate the scope of the problem faced by Egypt, it is sufficient to consider the report of the Secretary-General, which points out that the cost of neutralizing a single landmine is between $100 and $1,000, depending on several factors, including the quality of the mine, the nature of the terrain and, of course, the available technology. Faced with such problems, no governmental or non-governmental body in a country such as Egypt could, by itself, bear such a financial burden. It would be unreasonable for Egypt to have to bear alone the excessive cost of clearing these mines, which were not laid by Egyptians and never served any Egyptian interest whatsoever.

I take this opportunity to highlight, from this rostrum, the importance for the States responsible for laying such mines to carry out their major responsibilities in demining, by providing either technology or *matériel* for demining programmes. There is no doubt that the effectiveness of Egypt's ambitious programme would be improved if the countries to which I referred agreed to bear their responsibilities for demining by providing training or the necessary equipment and advanced technology for demining.

Our understanding of this problem is based on two major factors. The first relates to international efforts, which should be intensified so that the enormous quantity of landmines planted during earlier hostilities and wars can be cleared. The second factor is preventive and requires other countries to restrict their mine-laying activities — an action whose impact would go far beyond demining. On that basis, Egypt voted in the First Committee in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/51/L.46 on an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines, despite our conviction that it had many defects, including the fact that it did not refer to demining itself. We are in favour of a negotiating machinery, agreed upon in all transparency, aimed at reaching an international agreement restricting the use of landmines. Such an agreement should contain a clear international commitment to clearing all existing mines within a predetermined time-frame.

Finally, the delegation of Egypt would like to commend the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as well as other Departments that cooperate in demining, and their personnel. We would like to express our satisfaction with the fact that mine-action activities are currently taking place in nine countries and our hope that many more countries will join them. We call on all countries to participate in the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance so that these constantly growing programmes can be financed and new ones launched in 1997. We also endorse the assessment of the Secretary-General concerning the benefits that could be drawn from an annual donors' meeting to replenish the Fund.

We also agree that it is necessary to make major, sustained international efforts to deal with the consequences of landmines and their negative effects on development. We call for sustained international support for the efforts of the countries suffering from these problems and on Member States to provide and develop technology for further demining in a global context that would encompass the humanitarian, social, economic and other aspects of the problem.

Mr. Takht-Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The issue of landmines, with their lethal nature and collateral effects, has seriously concerned the international community over the past several years. The world is shocked by the monumental number of mines that infest various countries in conflict and post-conflict eras, as well as by the horrendous consequences of their indiscriminate use. This issue defies the imagination and demands comprehensive, yet prompt solutions. For its part, and as an affected State, the Islamic Republic of Iran has actively participated in the work of competent bodies dealing with landmines and has supported in principle any genuine initiative aimed at prohibiting all types of landmines, without exception.

Every month landmines claim 800 lives and maim more than 1,000 people. Such casualty levels surely charge the international community with the responsibility to respond to this compelling challenge and to spare no effort to alleviate this senseless human suffering.

My country appreciates the depth and magnitude of the many problems associated with mine clearance in

post-conflict cases. About 16 million landmines and unexploded devices were laid throughout more than 4 million hectares of Iranian territory temporarily occupied during different stages of the Iran-Iraq war. Over the past eight years, we have embarked upon a massive mine-clearance operation to enable civilians displaced by the war to return to their homes. Using manual demining methods, we have succeeded in neutralizing more than one third of all the mines and unexploded devices laid in our country. However, lack of access to mechanical mine-clearance equipment, as well as to maps of mine fields, has not only slowed our efforts, but has also caused casualties among innocent civilians and those involved in mine-clearance operations.

It is indeed ironic that the recent worldwide campaign to eliminate anti-personnel landmines has not been accompanied by the promotion of demining in affected States or the transfer of newer mine-clearance technologies to these countries. Various types of mechanical mine-clearance equipment continue to remain subject to discriminatory and unjustifiable export control regimes. In this regard, we call upon all States, especially those that have a capacity to do so, to go beyond their words and to provide technological assistance to mine-afflicted countries. They should also promote scientific research and development of humanitarian mine-clearance techniques and technology so that mine-clearance activities can be more effectively carried out at lower cost and through safer means.

The United Nations has a special role to play in this regard. The United Nations needs to ensure that no State applies any restrictions that would hinder or otherwise impede, in any manner, access to mine-clearance technology. At the same time, all States, particularly those which have the required technology and equipment for mine clearance, should declare to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs the kind of assistance, both financial and technical, that they can provide to mine-infested countries and to relevant United Nations programmes. It is indispensable for all serious United Nations programmes to facilitate the access of mine-stricken nations to the necessary machinery and technology for speedy and effective mine clearance.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): This past year, we have seen the international community become increasingly aware of the serious and devastating effects of anti-personnel landmines. The reports of the Secretary-General, in particular that on the consequences of armed conflicts on children, have been very eloquent in this respect, as have the documents of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which point out that the victims of these inhumane weapons are primarily civilians, children, women, peasants and the city dwellers.

We also must note the recent International Strategy Conference that took place in Ottawa from 3 to 5 October, the goals of which were to arrive as quickly as possible at an international agreement totally banning anti-personnel landmines and to make the international community recognize the need to increase significantly the resources dedicated to demining operations and assistance to the victims. It is also important to note the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology that was held this past July in Denmark and the future international conferences on the subject to be held in Tokyo and Brussels in 1997.

All of this indicates that the international community is now trying to act decisively on the question of anti-personnel landmines. We note the achievements of the recent Geneva Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and in particular its amendment of Protocol II of the Convention. However, we regret that it was not possible to broaden the Convention to include a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines. We believe that we cannot abandon our commitment to continue seeking agreement on this issue.

Given the progress made to date, we cannot forget that we must move towards prohibiting and completely eliminating this kind of weapon, because of its mass, indiscriminate and devastating effects, its long-term threat, its tragic human consequences and its widespread hindrance of the productive use of broad areas, particularly affecting those most in need and seriously jeopardizing the living conditions of many peoples. It is also important to eliminate such weapons because nobody today can be sure that, in addition to the States that employ them, criminal groups — if they are not doing so already — will not soon be making use of landmines, with unimaginable consequences.

Therefore, all States must comply with the international norms in force today regarding anti-personnel landmines and join in the efforts being made to improve the existing instruments. It is reprehensible that the States Members of the United Nations, under the

pretext of security, are seeking to preserve their ability to export these weapons. It is particularly serious and censurable that States that are parties to the Convention — and therefore explicitly bound by international instruments now in force — should be placing landmines in urban or otherwise populated areas, in flagrant violation of the norms of international law.

On earlier occasions, my country has stated and wishes to reiterate here that the proliferation and indiscriminate use of these devastating devices are sufficient reason for the international community to give urgent priority to this issue. Peru stands by its decision to work in this and other international forums to reach an international agreement banning the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, we were one of the sponsors of a draft resolution that was approved in the First Committee and which will be taken up by this Assembly in the next few days.

We would like to take this opportunity, however, to note that specific rules to make demining mandatory must be imposed on States that employ this practice and at the same time international cooperation on demining programmes must be strengthened. The responsibility of the States for harm caused to non-combatant victims, taking into account the delayed effects of these weapons and the damage they cause, especially after conflicts, must also be recognized.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The General Assembly will consider the draft resolution to be submitted under agenda item 34 at a later date, to be announced.

Agenda item 21 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/303, A/51/356, A/51/560)

Draft resolutions A/51/L.22, L.24/Rev.1, L.25/Rev.1/ L.30 and L.32/Rev.1

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolutions A/51/L.22, L.24/Rev.1, L.25/Rev.1, L.30 and L.32/Rev.1.

I call upon the representative of Lebanon to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1.

Mr. Hamdan (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Lebanon has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1, "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon", on behalf of the following sponsors: Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Paraguay, Poland, Qatar, Romania, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United States of America and Lebanon.

I believe that everyone is aware of the magnitude of Lebanon's requirements for reconstruction and development as a result of the long and devastating war it has experienced. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have adopted a number of resolutions on a regular basis in order to assist Lebanon. Indeed, the international community, the donor community and non-governmental organizations have responded very positively to those resolutions.

Today, Lebanon resembles a vast construction site for the reconstruction and development of the country. This is an example of the success that can be achieved through cooperation between the various elements of the international community and the recipient State. Lebanon has become a model of a country that is building peace after war.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, the requirements remain enormous, and the need for international assistance remains great. Indeed, there is an urgent need to develop the forms of such assistance, for an international consultative group on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Lebanon is soon to be established.

One of the major problems created by the war was the displacement of scores of thousands of persons from their homes and villages and the destruction of villages in various parts of the country, especially in the south. In addition, the return of peace and stability has helped the State to eliminate such illegal crops as marijuana, which, in turn, has led to an urgent need to develop alternative

crops in the areas where marijuana was formerly being grown illicitly, particularly in the area around Baalbeck-Hermel.

Therefore, the draft resolution reaffirms the pressing need to continue to assist the Government of Lebanon and, indeed, for an increase in such assistance, either in the form of soft loans or of financial grants, and for assistance to be given to the international consultative group and to the State for the return of displaced persons and their rehabilitation and reintegration in their regions and in the reconstruction and development of Baalbeck-Hermel and the south Lebanon region.

We hope that the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: I now call upon the representative of the Congo to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.30.

Mr. Abibi (Congo) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.30, "Assistance to Mozambique", on behalf of the States members of the Group of African States and the following sponsors: Australia, Austria, China, France, Pakistan, Portugal, Romania and the United States of America.

The text of the draft resolution before the Assembly today is much the same as that of resolution 49/21 D, adopted on 20 December 1994, at the Assembly's forty-ninth session. The present text quite naturally reflects the positive developments that have occurred in Mozambique over the past two years, developments that were noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/560).

In the first preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution, the General Assembly recalls previous resolutions and emphasizes the need to foster the establishment of a national mine-clearance capacity with a view to enabling the Government of Mozambique to deal more effectively with the adverse effects of such weapons within the framework of the efforts for national reconstruction. The last two preambular paragraphs are the same as those of the earlier resolution.

The operative portion of the draft resolution does not differ substantively from the earlier resolution, but we would nonetheless like to emphasize certain elements we consider to be of major importance. In operative paragraph 3, the Assembly welcomes the progress made in the consolidation of a lasting peace and tranquillity, the enhancement of democracy and the promotion of national reconciliation in Mozambique. The following operative paragraphs deal with questions of the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of Mozambican citizens from neighbouring countries.

As you know, this programme covers more than 1.7 million Mozambican citizens and is considered to be one of the largest and most successful programmes undertaken under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In paragraph 5, the Assembly stresses that Mozambique has made significant progress in mitigating the consequences of a devastating war and that continued substantial coordinated international assistance is required to assist the country in addressing its development needs, in particular with regard to the resettlement and reintegration of internally displaced persons and demobilized soldiers.

Paragraph 6 urges those that have a capacity to do so to contribute to mine clearance and to continue to provide the needed assistance with a view to enabling the Government of Mozambique to develop its national mine-clearance capacity.

The draft resolution takes into account paragraph 11 of the report of the Secretary-General on "Assistance to Mozambique", which states:

> "Starting in 1995, political and economic transition in Mozambique has shown promising signs of a return to stability and normality: peace, national reconciliation and the vitality of the young democracy have taken root; parliamentary performance improved noticeably; one has witnessed an open, free and lively interface between government, legislature and media; overall the social climate remained calm; resettlement of internally displaced people and returning refugees was consolidated; reintegration of demobilized soldiers has been relatively free of major disruption; the mine-clearance programme proceeded at a reasonable pace; reconstruction and economic reform made further progress; the re-emerging domestic private sector has become increasingly dynamic." *(A/51/560)*

We are convinced that the adoption by consensus by the General Assembly of the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.30 would convey a particularly strong

message of solidarity on the part of the international community and a real encouragement to Mozambicans in their efforts to consolidate peace, strengthen democracy, promote national reconciliation and cope with their development needs.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Djibouti to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1.

Mr. Dorani (Djibouti) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.32.Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti", on behalf of the following sponsors: Angola, Belize, Cameroon, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Gabon, Haiti, Honduras, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

The structure of the draft is similar to that of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year. The text reiterates the socio-economic problems facing Djibouti, including the recurrent problem of cyclical droughts, the presence of refugees and the prolonged consequences of earlier regional conflicts, particularly the one in Somalia. These factors, taken together, have created a difficult economic and financial situation in Djibouti.

In the operative part of the draft resolution the General Assembly welcomes the implementation by the Government of Djibouti of the structural adjustment programme and, in that context, appeals to the international community to participate actively in the round table on Djibouti which will take place in February 1997 with a view to responding urgently in an appropriate manner to the financial and material needs of Djibouti. It also requests the Secretary-General to prepare a study of the progress made in time for the question to be considered by the General Assembly at its next session.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/51/L.22, A/51/L.24/Rev.1, A/51/L.25/Rev.1, A/51/L.30 and A/51/L.32/Rev.1.

We turn first to draft resolution A/51/L.22, entitled "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia".

The sponsors of this draft resolution also include the Czech Republic.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.22?

Draft resolution A/51/L.22 was adopted (resolution 51/30 A).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.24/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia".

Pakistan should be added to the sponsors listed.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.24/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.24/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/30 B).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/30 C).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.30, entitled "Assistance to Mozambique".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.30?

Draft resolution A/51/L.30 was adopted (resolution 51/30 D).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/30 E).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to inform the Assembly that action on other draft resolutions submitted or to be submitted under agenda item 21 will be taken at a later date to be announced.

Programme of work

The President: I should now like to share with you some information pertaining to the status of the Assembly's work at its current session.

I am happy to inform you that all Main Committees, with the exception of the Fifth Committee, have for the most part completed their work as scheduled, that is, by 29 November — the Second Committee concluded on 2 December 1996. I wish to congratulate the Chairmen, Bureaux, delegates and Secretariat members who have made this possible. It proves that we can complete our work on time.

As announced on Tuesday, 3 December, the plenary will consider the reports of the First Committee on 10 December. I will inform you tomorrow of the dates for consideration of the reports of the other Main Committees. These dates will depend on the status of documentation, which is influenced by when the Main Committees submit their reports for processing.

As all of you are aware, we agreed at the outset of the fifty-first session that this session would recess on 17 December. In this regard, I wish to appeal to all of you to help me conclude the remaining work, especially the consideration of and action on items which must be concluded before we recess. Between today and 17 December, we have a total of eight — repeat eight — working days left.

Much more work remains to be done in the plenary meetings and in the Fifth Committee.

As regards organizational working methods, I am glad to report that virtually all the Main Committees that have completed their work succeeded in doing so well within the scheduled number of meetings. For instance, the Fourth Committee concluded its work using only 22 of the 30 meetings allocated.

Punctuality, coupled with time limits on statements and deadlines, helped all these Committees to accomplish their objectives. Before this session adjourns, I hope to share with you the notional savings made as a result of these improved working methods.

At the same time, I must point out that Economic and Social Council meetings, which were held during the General Assembly session, conflicted with the meetings of the Second and Third Committees and caused delays in the consideration of items. I hope this can be avoided in the future.

In terms of resolutions and decisions, most of the Main Committees, with the exception of the Second Committee, recommended for adoption by the General Assembly about the same number of resolutions as in previous years.

The First Committee recommended for adoption 48 resolutions and decisions this year, compared to 49 in 1995; the Second Committee recommended 28, as compared to 43 in 1995; the Third Committee recommended 66 this year, as compared to 65 last year; the Fourth Committee recommended 26 resolutions and 4 decisions this year, as compared to 23 resolutions and 5 decisions last year; and the Sixth Committee recommended 14 resolutions and one decision this year, as opposed to 13 resolutions and one decision last year.

As you can see, the Second Committee has been successful in reducing the number of resolutions by clustering some of them. I believe the other Committees too have had varying degrees of success with clustering.

As for the meetings of the plenary, to date 29 resolutions have been adopted, of which 6 came from the Fifth Committee.

I now turn to documentation, which has been one of the primary problems. I understand from the Secretariat that the delay in documentation is attributable in the main to late submissions by those responsible for the reports. The late submission of human rights reports from Geneva caused cancellations of meetings and in some cases jeopardized negotiations on draft proposals for Committee consideration and the timely conclusion of work. Some of these reports were too long, with those responsible failing to submit an executive summary.

Given the financial cuts and their implications, the capacity for the documentation services to perform tasks at extremely short notice has been further circumscribed.

While all reports must be of acceptable length, delegations and the Secretariat must work together to address this perennial problem once and for all.

Deadlines for submission of documentation should be tightened and enforced more rigorously.

As for the plenary meetings, let me first share with you some statistical information. The number of items or sub-items or parts/aspects of items allocated to the plenary was 75. The number of those whose consideration has been concluded is 30; the number of those whose consideration has not been concluded is 17; the number of those scheduled but not yet considered is 6; the number of those not yet considered and not yet scheduled is 22.

As all of you are aware, one of the key agenda items is item 16, entitled "Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations". In this connection, you are aware of my letter dated 25 November 1996, in which I alerted the Security Council that the General Assembly was scheduled to conclude by 17 December. When the President of the Security Council met me on 2 December, he acknowledged the letter and explained that the Council was fully seized of the matter. He explained that while all efforts would be made, it was likely that the Council would go beyond 17 December.

With regard to the election of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, under agenda item 17 (c), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, the Executive Director is elected by the General Assembly on the nomination of the Secretary-General. As the term of office of the current Executive Director expires on 31 December 1996, I sent a letter to the Secretary-General on 25 November and asked him for his cooperation in this matter.

Another pressing matter concerns the appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences, agenda item 18 (g). The General Assembly is required to appoint seven members at this session. The terms of office of the retiring members expire on 31 December 1996. On 12 November I requested, in writing, the Chairmen of regional groups to inform me of endorsed candidates from their respective groups. As of now, the Group of Eastern European States and the Group of Western European and Other States have each endorsed one candidate to fill one vacancy from their respective groups. However, we are still missing candidates for five vacancies as follows: two candidates from the African States, two candidates from the Asian States, and one candidate from the Latin American and Caribbean States. Once again, I appeal to the three groups concerned, in particular to their Chairmen, to assist me in this matter and to communicate to the Secretariat as soon as possible the names of endorsed candidates.

In addition to the items I have just mentioned, there are some other pending items or matters concerning the plenary meetings that are under negotiation or consultation. I urge those delegations concerned to expedite their consultations and to submit the relevant draft resolutions for action in the plenary, preferably early next week. Furthermore, it is most urgent that those draft resolutions with programme budget implications be submitted as soon as possible. I cannot help but underline that late submission of drafts will impose further strains on the documentation services.

While recognizing the sovereign rights of Member States, I also wish to appeal to delegations to exercise restraint in proposing new additional items, especially when this session is about to adjourn and many issues still require action.

My main concern at the moment is to ensure that the consideration of reports of Main Committees are not held up at plenary level because of the debate over financial resources. My specific proposal is to suggest that the Fifth Committee, after adoption of the draft resolution by the Main Committee concerned on the basis of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, will take note of the estimate of additional requirements contained in the programme budget implications, on the understanding that such additional appropriation as may be necessary will be determined in the context of a revised appropriation, taking into account all relevant information, including the performance report. On this basis the Assembly may proceed to adopt the draft resolution.

The text of the remarks I have just made is available on the Internet home page of the Mission of Malaysia, at www.undp.org/missions/malaysia.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.